

26 March 2026

FOI Ref 22684

**Request - You asked Staffordshire Police (SP) the following:**

For the period 1 January 2021 to 28 February 2026, please provide:

The total number of rape and sexual assault crimes recorded that include the tag 'online', 'virtual reality', 'VR' or 'virtual'.

The total number of rape and sexual assault crimes recorded including the tag 'metaverse', 'meta', 'Roblox', or 'Fortnite'.

The gender and age of any victims - if unable to be specific then under 10, under 13, under 16, under 18, or 18+ is acceptable.

Whether these crimes resulted in any investigation (and if this is ongoing), arrests, charges, prosecutions, and convictions.

SP received your request on 20/03/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

**SP holds the requested information.**

- For the period 1 January 2021 to 28 February 2026, please provide:
- The total number of rape and sexual assault crimes recorded that include the tag 'online', 'virtual reality', 'VR' or 'virtual'.
- The total number of rape and sexual assault crimes recorded including the tag 'metaverse', 'meta', 'Roblox', or 'Fortnite'.
- The gender and age of any victims - if unable to be specific then under 10, under 13, under 16, under 18, or 18+ is acceptable.
- Whether these crimes resulted in any investigation (and if this is ongoing), arrests, charges, prosecutions, and convictions.  
- **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 22684 Sexual Assault Offences Data'. Please see the below exemption.**

**Please note that there are a number of offences that are still being investigated so with regard to these cases we are citing Section 30(1)(a)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Investigations conducted by Public Authorities.**

**These cases have been included in the overall figures but any further breakdown has not been included.**

Please note: This data was obtained by completing a summary search for the terms “online”, “virtual reality”, “VR”, “virtual”, “metaverse”, “meta”, “roblox” and “fortnite”. The accuracy and reliability of these searches cannot be guaranteed as only the MO / summary field of the report is searched. If this term is mentioned elsewhere (i.e. within the call log, crime report, statements etc) these will not be returned in the results. Additionally, if the term is misspelt within the MO / summary field, this will not be returned. To provide accurate results would require manually interrogating each crime within the specified timeframe to establish its relevance to your request.

Please note that this data has been provided to the best of the ability of SP, subject to the limitation of current recording protocols and systems/software. Additional offences may have been recorded during these timescales but are awaiting finalisation and input onto these systems and would not be present within this dataset.

Every effort is made to ensure that the data presented is accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that this has been extracted from multiple sources, developed for specific policing purposes, for which data extraction methods have not been specifically designed to directly correlate with the terminology of this request. Therefore, the data presented is subject to the inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

Consequently, care should be taken in the interpretation and presentation of this data, to not misrepresent the whole or any part of the data disclosed.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP website although personal details are not included.

**The following exemption has been applied:**

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for parts of this particular request.

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and class based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.

**Public Interest Test**

**Factors favouring disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)**

Disclosure of the information would improve the public’s knowledge and understanding of the investigatory process and, as all police investigations are publicly funded, would show how public funds are being spent.

**Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)**

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. SP is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Any release of information relating to ongoing investigations could prejudice and undermine those investigations. The prevention and detection of such matters could therefore be hindered and therefore risk interference with evidence, which could have detrimental impact on future investigations. In addition, the right to a fair trial could be undermined.

## **Balance test**

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant. Having considered the public interest factors we are required to determine whether on balance the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. It is our view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour non-disclosure.

## **Advice and assistance**

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, in order to comply with this obligation please see below.

Staffordshire Police do not hold conviction data. We would advise that you approach the Government HM Courts & Tribunals service website.

Please find below links to previously disclosed HMCTS data and details upon how to submit a further Freedom of Information request to the Government HM Courts and Tribunals Service for this information. Make an FOI request - [how to make a request](#). Check [our previous releases](#) to see if we've already answered your question - [our previous releases](#)

Make a new request by using the details below.

FOI requests

Disclosure Team

Postal Point 10.38, Floor 10

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

United Kingdom

Email [data.access@justice.gov.uk](mailto:data.access@justice.gov.uk)

## **Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure**

### **1. Who Can Ask for a Review**

Any person who has requested information from SP, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

### **2. How to Request a Review**

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing within two months of the date of receipt of this email, and should be addressed to:

[IAT@staffordshire.police.uk](mailto:IAT@staffordshire.police.uk)

Or by Post to:

Information Access Team

Staffordshire Police HQ  
PO Box 3167  
Stafford  
ST16 9JZ

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Information Access Team within two months of the SP response to the original FOI request.

### **3. Review Procedure**

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by a supervisor who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Information Access Team will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to forty working days.

The independent supervisor will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, considering the matters raised by the complaint.

### **4. Conclusion of the Appeal**

On completion of the review the independent supervisor will reply to the appellant with the result of the review. If the appellant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following link:  
<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information  
Information Access Team